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AUTHOR Lockledge, Ann
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes Caribbean street festivals as celebrations that reflect the historic, climate, and movement patterns of the region. Celebrations such as Carnival, Hosay, and Jonkonnu are discussed, and it is proposed that study of these and other festivals can be linked to the five thematic generalizations often utilized by geographers. These themes are location, place, relationships, movement, and region. It is concluded that placing holiday celebrations into the framework of the themes of geographic education will lead children to look beyond the celebration to the culture and the environment that created it. A perspective are suggested, as are a number of learning activities. An 11-item list of references also is included. (DB)

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THE GEOGRAPHY OF CARIBBEAN HOLIDAYS

Presentation at the
International Social Studies Conference on the Caribbean
The Caribbean: Cradle, Crossroads, and Crucible of the Americas
Miami, Florida,
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Ann Lockledge
UNCW School of Education
Wilmington, NC 28403
919-395-3360

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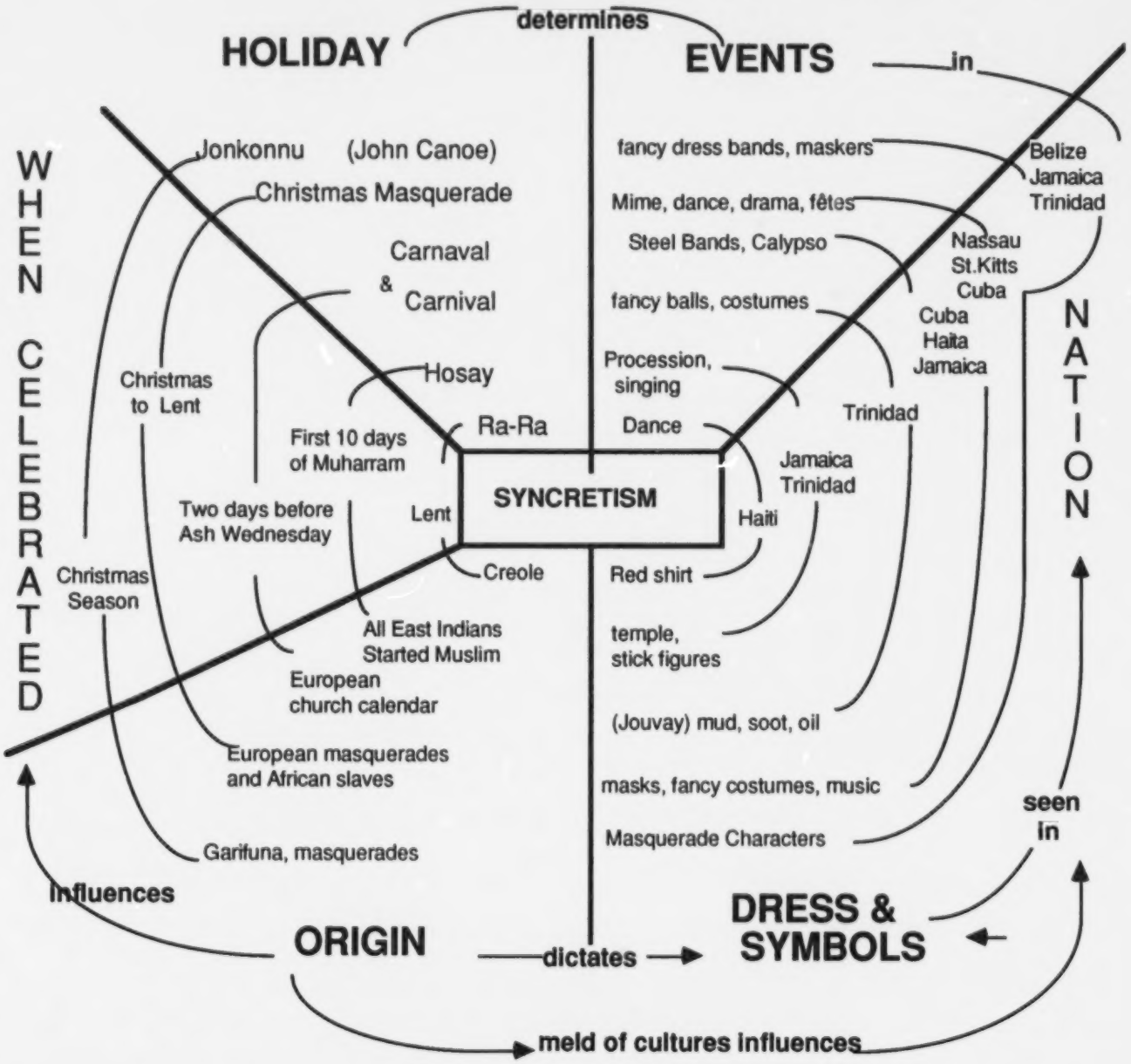
CARIBBEAN STREET FESTIVALS

Celebrations which reflect the historic, climate, and movement patterns of the region.



Ann Lockledge

UNCW School of Education
Wilmington, NC 28403
919-395-3360

STREET FESTIVALS IN THE CARIBBEAN

Ann Lockledge

Caribbean peoples have always been on the move. The original inhabitants, the Carib and Arawak Indians, migrated from island to island. British, French and Spanish settlers came and moved in search of a better life shuttling their slaves to and fro as they saw fit. This movement of people throughout the region resulted in an intermingling of the various cultures. Yet each of the island nations retained a separate personality.

The crisscrossing from island to island and the resultant mixture of cultures created festivals of great diversity. The warm sunshine of the Caribbean climate brought European traditional celebrations out into the streets. Stately dances and formal masques were commingled with African rhythms and exuberant steps. The street festivals became a creole melding of the whole range of influences operating in the region. Most of the street festivals involve bright costumes, intricate dancing, and music with strong rhythmic beats. But they are not the same and they do not happen at the same time or for the same reason.

The best known of these celebrations is Carnival which has today become big business in most of the island nations. Traditional Carnival is celebrated during the two days prior to Ash Wednesday. But parties are held each weekend after Christmas as entire cities become seething workshops of costume preparation. Steel bands can be heard performing and practicing for weeks. Jouvay or opening day begins at dawn when participants cover themselves with mud, soot and oil, dress in worn, old clothes or dilapidated costumes. Jouvay symbolizes the joy of the slaves when the sugar cane was all harvested and they were free for a time from the grueling work. The

parade recalls the days when black slaves used torches to light the way of those who had to be out and about. On Monday night people attend parties and wait for the grand finale on Tuesday when they masquerade in the streets for hours on end until carnival ends at midnight.

Hosay is another street festival with quite a difference origin. It began as a time when Muslims in Trinidad were allowed to carry sacred objects through the streets. It has become a festival for all East Indians that have settled in the Caribbean. The Hosay Festival comes during the first days of Muharram, the first month of the Muslim year. Wherever East Indians settled in large numbers in the Caribbean, the Hosay festival followed. It unites Hindus, Muslims and others who maintain their East Indian identity

The Central American area inhabited by the Garifuna (Black Caribs) shares a masquerade tradition common to the Caribbean. John Canoe appear on Christmas Day and Boxing Day and dance from house to house to the music of drums and the songs of a female chorus. They dance individually with no mimed dramas and do not differentiate characters by costume elements. Cloth head wraps, wire screen masks, colored long socks, knee rattles and white or black canvas shoes are characteristic. Jonkonnu (as the holiday is usually identified) is really a secular festival because it does not address gods or spirits in any systematic manner. Its fascination lies in the combining of practices and ethnic elements from Europe and Africa into a distinctively creole mix. This Christmas season street celebration moved to cities with entourages of either roots masquers or fancy dress bands parading the streets. While the masquers perform traditional characterizations, fancy dress bands tend to use adaptations of African costumes including wire screen masks, flowers, and Christmas ornaments.

Holiday celebrations in the Caribbean are important contemporary social events with historical, geographical, and cultural significance. We can teach children about these celebrations and use the occasion to foster significant social learning by exploring the impact of culture on culture as people move about the region. The study of holidays is a perfect opportunity for elementary teachers to bring all of the social science disciplines into focus for their students and to teach them the fundamentals of inquiry and critical thinking. The Caribbean as a topic will enchant them.

This study of Caribbean Street Festivals can be linked to the five thematic generalizations which have been identified by geographers as going beyond the memorization of place name locations. The theme of **location** can be addressed by finding the various islands and Caribbean rim countries where street festivals have become a part of the culture. Finding where a particular festival originated can be done using either relative placement or simple reference systems. The physical and human characteristics of **place** will be emphasized with special celebrations that result from the particular background of the people who live in various Caribbean nations. The third theme, **relationships** between people and their environment comes into play when considering that all of these festivals take place out of doors and rely heavily on the warm temperatures of these island nations. The theme of **movement** of human beings as they interact on the face of the earth becomes very apparent when identifying the melding of European and African traditions and musical forms. Many holidays have moved from place to place with the movement of the people who enjoyed them but the street festivals and thus the street festivals of the Caribbean have strong ties with one another even thought each nation has its own variations. In this **Region** the way people celebrate holidays is partially a result of climate and landform and partially historical but adaptations have been made by people who had no idea of the original significance.

Putting holiday celebrations into the framework of the five themes of geographic education will lead children to look beyond the celebration to the culture and the environment that created it. Children as well as adults need to see the world not as an arena for constant political strife but rather as a place where friendliness and neighborliness among people can develop via the celebrations they cherish. Providing vicarious experiences that let students look at the Caribbean region through the eyes of people who live there, or came from there, may counteract some of the misguided efforts of the past that led to the development of stereotypical oversimplification. Using the geographic framework for accomplishing the task provides a way to organize understandings about this topic of great diversity.

GEOGRAPHIC EDUCATION NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT

FIVE THEMES AND FIFTEEN KEY IDEAS

Location: Position on the Earth's Surface
- Location of places can be described using relative terms
- Location of places can be described using reference systems.
- Reasons can be identified for the location of places

Place: Physical and Human Characteristics
- Places have physical characteristics
- Places have human characteristics
- Places may be described or represented in different ways

Relationships Within Places: Humans and Environments
- Relationships within places include how people depend on the environment
- Relationships within places include how people adapt to and change the environment
- Relationships within places include the impact of technology on the environment

Movement: Humans Interacting on the Earth
- Movement demonstrates interdependence
- Movement involves linages between places
- Patterns of movement involve people, ideas, and products

Regions: How They Form and Change
- Regions are a way to organize information
- A region has common characteristics
- Regions change

A LIST OF REFERENCES FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS

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POSSIBLE STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING ABOUT FESTIVALS

Analyze the content map of the Caribbean street festivals. Discuss how it meets the five themes. Have students make a content map of their own about one festival.

Make comparisons of two pictures which show different ways of celebrating the same type of festival (harvest, historic event, scenic).

Play Jeopardy with each of the five themes of geography as a different category. Questions for the answers would involve information about street festivals studied.

Make flour and water maps or papier maché globes showing location and symbolism of festivals. Or make masks,etc for wearing in the class festival.

Draw time lines of the origin of different festivals or of their occurrence throughout the year.

Form cooperative learning groups to plan a festival celebration. Students would include the background and reason for the festival. Planning a street festival would be particularly useful when studying the Caribbean.

Have children make figures involved with a street festival, glue sandpaper or felt on back and use on a flannel board to tell a story. Write a single episode story to go with the figures.

Prepare a study guide about all of the festivals studied. Have children work in cooperative groups to find all of the answers. Study in pairs.

Make a seek-and-find with all of the festivals or locations studied. List description as a riddle, don't list names. Use as a motivational review sheet.

Have an interactive bulletin board with a map in the center. Put colored yarn hanging from specific locations. On cards around the map have a way to attach the yarn and a festival custom. Pictures or student designed costumes on small figures would make an exciting border.

Send children to collect oral histories from older people in the community who can tell of celebrations in an earlier time or different place.

Have class participate in panel discussions about possible new festivals based on geographic considerations.

Role-play solutions (sociodrama) about children who make fun of someone else's festival or holiday.

Make Dioramas of an historical or geographic phenomena celebrated by a festival.

LEARNING COOPERATIVELY ABOUT FESTIVALS

Each student moves to a corner of the room representing a teacher-determined holiday or festival. Students discuss within corners how the class might celebrate, then listen to and paraphrase ideas from other corners. The end result is to be a planned street festival for the entire class.

After reading material, students in a small group write simultaneously on a piece of chart paper, drawing links between concepts, supporting elements, and bridges representing the relationship of ideas. Afterwards each group member stops and explains to the group what was done. Chart paper is shown and explained to the entire class.

Simple symbols of various festivals are drawn on cards. Duplicate sets are available for each group. Each student in the group draws a card and, using oral communication only, tries to get other group members to draw the symbol.

The teacher asks a question about a Caribbean island festival. Students consult to make sure everyone on their team knows the answer. One student from each team is selected randomly to point to the island and write the answer on the board.

Each student in the room is given a different Caribbean country to research. Students interview each other in teams of three. Each student must then report on someone else's information to another group or the whole class.

Students stand in two concentric circles holding several cards with the name of a festival written on each. The inside circle faces out; the outside circle faces in. The teacher asks questions about a Caribbean nation and the way their festivals originated (folk custom, historic event, geographic landform, etc.). Students talk it over with the person facing them and raise hands to answer. Circles rotate clockwise as soon as a correct answer is given.

Folders of information about holidays and festival around the world are circulated among pairs of students. Students write descriptive words about place and movement. Afterwards each pair creates a diamante poem using the 5 themes of geography.

A GEOGRAPHY THEME POEM

Line one -- Location -- Name of the country or area
Line two -- Place -- 2 or 3 words that describe the setting
Line three -- Relationships -- 3 words that tell what people are doing
Line four -- Movement -- Phrase that describes movement
Line five -- Region -- 2 or 3 words that describe the holiday
Line six -- Name of holiday

WRITE A FESTIVAL STORY FOLLOWING A SINGLE EPISODE PLAN

1. SETTING — Tell about where and perhaps when the story events happen. Introduce main character.

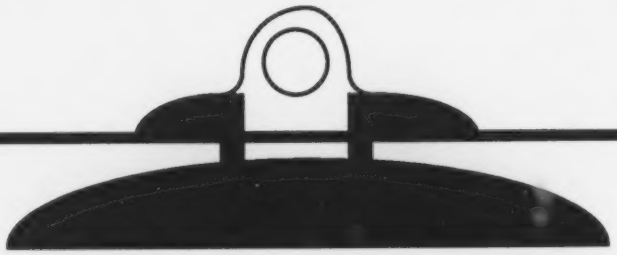
2. INITIATE EVENTS — Plan an action that starts the storyline. Cause the main character to do something and to decide on a goal.

3. EXPLAIN RESPONSE — Tell the feelings and thoughts of the main character that causes him/her to start doing something. Show attitude.

4. MAKE AN ATTEMPT — Explain the action, or series of actions, carried out by the main character in order to try to reach the goal.

5. CONSEQUENCE — Finish by describing the event that explains how the main character met or did not meet his goal.

6. REACTION — Relate the internal response that tells the main character's feelings about the outcome of his actions.



CLIPBOARD FOR COLLECTING DATA

FESTIVAL CELEBRATIONS AROUND THE WORLD

Name of holiday
Location
Time of Year

Why celebrated:

How celebrated:

Name of holiday
Location
Time of Year

Why celebrated:

How celebrated:

Name of holiday
Location
Time of Year

Why celebrated:

How celebrated:

Name of holiday
Location
Time of Year

Why celebrated:

How celebrated: